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REVIEWS AND NEW BOOKS

General Works, Theory and Its History

The Place of Science in Modern Civilization and Other Essays. By THORSTEIN VEBLEN. (New York: B. W. Huebsch. 1919. Pp. 509. \$3.00.)

From twelve to twenty-eight years have elapsed since the initial appearance in various learned periodicals of the essays by Mr. Veblen which are now assembled in *The Place of Science in Modern Civilization*. In the interval they have been thumbed over by graduate students, used for dialectic by professed economists, escaped the attention of the lay Veblen cult, and left their mark upon the development of the "science." An appraisal of the volume should, therefore, be something else than an impressionistic opinion by the reviewer about a book hot from the press. It should be a re-review of reviews, free from the taint of "opinion," and limited to a record of the "facts." But, even at this late date, so objective and colorless an appreciation of Mr. Veblen's contributions is impossible. The time was when they were far beyond the outer fringe of economic speculation. The time is when they are intimately associated with many daring quests which have overridden the older restraints upon theory. And intimacy is as great a bar to correct judgment as remoteness.

The essays which make up this volume, despite the range in time and place that marked their original publication, fall into an easy sequence. The first of three groups into which they fall is concerned with the meaning and the development of "the scientific point of view" and its place in modern culture. The last is given to a discussion of the "blonde race" and the incidence of its ethnic endowment upon "Aryan" culture. Between the two, running from page 56 to page 456, and comprising four fifths of this book, are a group of studies upon the nature, scope, limitations, and implications of economic theory. Since the first of these inquires into whether economics is an evolutionary science, the essays which give the volume its title may be regarded as a formal introduction to the discussion of economic theory. And since, back of both "science" and "economics," Mr. Veblen looks for "cultural antecedents," the study of the nature of the civilization of the "dolicho blonde" is not out of place. Thus, despite variety in subject-matter, the volume has unity. Its importance, however, lies in the ventures into economic criticism which make up its bulk and escape mention in its title.

If Mr. Veblen's vehicle had been a formal treatise his strictures upon accepted economic theory would have formed a single articulate study. The series of separate essays which he has used instead has the ad-

vantage of enabling him to get at his subject from many different angles. It also imparts a suggestiveness which a more formal discussion would have lacked. It allows a searching analysis of the pre-conceptions of classical theory in general; a specific appraisal of the theory of marginal utility; a lucid discussion of the nature of capital and of forms of employment; and a penetrating examination of the systems of economics which bear the names of J. B. Clark, Gustav Schmoller, and Karl Marx. The burden of this criticism is to show that reputable theory moves "in terms alien to the evolutionist's habit of thought"; that it assumes a "hedonistic conception of man" as "a lightning calculator of pleasures and pains, who oscillates like a homogeneous globule of desire of happiness under the influence of stimuli that shift him about the area, but leave him inert"; and that it takes for granted "a benign order of nature" and "a meliorative trend in the course of events." It discloses the small province of value theory which utility and productivity theorists have so meticulously cultivated; shows that Austrian and Clarkian economics are variants of the same general doctrine; and reveals both as refinements and sublimations of a system of thought which is essentially Ricardian. It refuses to find in the implications of a system of value proof that each gets "what he produces" and that the prevailing economic order is natural and moral.

The great merit of such a critique lies in its constructive value. The argument, in spite of its multiform appearance, has coherence, pertinency, and purpose; and all because Mr. Veblen has his theory about what economic theory should be about. He insists that the complex of activities which make up our industrial life forms a continuous process; that the economic order is peopled with real human beings, who have their varied characteristics and such differences one from another that the question of personal selection for economic place is an important one; that men are born into communities, with their set ways of doing things, and that they are moulded by these arrangements; that economics might well concern itself with discovering the nature of such of these arrangements as are pertinent to the problem of wealth; and that the goodness or badness, efficiency or inefficiency, of these schemes of life, instead of being taken for granted, are to be tested by definite standards and in the light of determined facts.

The nature of these suggestions can best be shown by an illustration which the reviewer will present in non-Veblenian terms. In one of the essays a careful distinction is made between industry and business. It is through industry that goods and services are fashioned and furnished; it is through business, at least at present, that the many and varied tasks of industry are organized. Industry is permanent and

indispensable. It exists upon the oasis, the manor, the frontier, the urban center. It will exist under any scheme of economic organization. If every act of production, of exchange, and of consumption were in response to the orders of an industrial autocrat, there would still be industry. Business, on the contrary, is only one of several schemes for the integration of industrial tasks into a system. It has almost no place on the manor and the frontier. It would not exist in a system organized by an autocratic despot. Even today its domain is not complete; it exerts little influence over the activities of the housewife and the conduct of the affairs of the family. It consists of a scheme of institutions which include the pecuniary calculus, the system of prices, the right to buy and sell, and the market. Most problems of the day involve the question of the success of business in organizing the industrial system. Most remedial measures include, in mild or drastic form, restrictions upon or substitutes for the various devices which make up the business control of industry. The distinction is essential to a correct formulation of the problem of an appraisal of the prevailing scheme of economic arrangements.

To these critical-constructive studies a significant place must be given. The literature of economics has always been rich in the type of criticism that projects doctrines upon the same intellectual plane, analyzes them minutely, and by comparative devices tries to reduce the whole truth to detailed formulation. It has been poor indeed in criticism that associates the general characteristics of bodies of doctrine with the specific problems which led to their formulation and with the systems of thought which they embody. Mr. Veblen did not bring the latter type of criticism into economics. But with its aid he has given the whole body of classical economic theory a meaning which it did not before possess and has clearly revealed its limitations. Moreover, he is preëminent in its use. It is significant that, though many have followed him, none of the later critics have discovered important leads which are not at least suggested in these essays. Some are sure that this critical work has demolished the older formulations and prepared the way for a "scientific" economics. Others insist that it has merely opened a new domain to economic theory by showing the "limitations" of the older doctrines. Still others maintain that its only effect has been to strip from the older theory implications of statement that were no essential part of it. It would be futile to set down the right answer to his question of constructive influence without making an exhaustive survey of Mr. Veblen's doctrines. And that cannot be attempted here. It seems certain, however, that even in this volume Mr. Veblen has done constructive work of great importance by pointing the

way to an examination and appraisal of the specific institutions which make up the prevailing economic order.

The difficulty of a current appraisal of Mr. Veblen's economics remains. But the nature of the difficulty has radically changed. The danger of ignoring him because he is far in advance of the scrimmage line is gone. The present danger is that his work will be appraised in terms that are indefinite and cosmic. There is already a tendency to make him responsible for all that is new in economics; and in history and politics and psychology as well. This danger was recently voiced by a distinguished English economist who gave an account of a meeting with Mr. Veblen in terms of a pilgrimage to a great American intellectual deity. And the movement has reached the laity. In this season's most "significant" novel the heroine who fights the smugness of the small town with affectation reads Veblen. This situation has been abetted by *The Leisure Class*, *Imperial Germany*, and *The Nature of Peace*, which have been read by the laity. Their glib phrases have convinced many of their readers that they have understood Veblen. For that reason *The Place of Science in Modern Civilization* is most welcome. It presupposes a specific acquaintance with economic theory. It is addressed to the professional economist. And it enables the cosmic judgments of Veblen's place in economics to be reduced to finite terms.

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Introduction to the Principles of Sociology. By GROVE SAMUEL DOW. (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press. 1920. Pp. 505.)

Sociology: Its Development and Applications. By JAMES QUAYLE DEALEY. (New York: D. Appleton and Company. 1920. Pp. xv, 547. \$3.00.)

Social Theory. By G. D. H. COLE. (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company. 1920. Pp. 220. \$1.50.)

The History of Social Development. By F. MUELLER-LYER. Translated by ELIZABETH COOTE LAKE and H. A. LAKE. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd. 1920. Pp. 362.)

The promise of the preface of Professor Dow's work that the book will take up "in a related fashion" the "different specific phases" of the subject hitherto presented by sociologists is hardly fulfilled. There is a large amount of helpful discussion and elucidation of various social problems, and consideration of historical and developmental factors, but very little clear-cut exposition of the relation between cause and effect, law and principle, in the broad reaches of the subject, and no marked sense of order or relationship.

After a brief introductory chapter on the nature of sociology, there